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ABSTRACT

This paper first examines gender-related barriers in occupational choice and educational practice and then discusses gender issues as they relate to classroom instruction. The shortage of women in educational administration is addressed, noting two main types of barriers--role discrimination and access discrimination. The historical antecedents of beliefs about occupations suitable for men and women are reviewed. Recommendations for eliminating barriers for women seeking administrative appointments are offered. The second part of the paper considers how girls are shortchanged by the school system. Research is cited showing that girls are subjected to gender bias as reflected in differential treatment during instruction as well as sexual harassment from boys. Teacher attitudes and stereotyping of female students' abilities are also documented. The paper concludes, first, that changes in hiring practices and attitudes are necessary to make administration more accessible to women and, second, that changes in school practices are necessary to make the classroom climate a friendlier one for girls. Schools are urged not to tolerate sexually harassing behaviors among students. (Contains 32 references.) (DB)

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Gender Issues in Education

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In Alberta women comprise 5% of school superintendents, 3% of high schools principals and 19% of elementary school principals but 63% of all teachers (Rees, 1990). These statistics indicate that men manage and administer our school systems and that women are proportionately underrepresented in educational administrative positions. Why is this gender imbalance present in our educational system? Why is leadership potential more likely to be nurtured and developed by men than women? What can be done to redress this imbalance? In the first part of this paper, I will examine some of the historical antecedents affecting beliefs about the kinds of occupations that are suitable for men and women, and offer suggestions for eliminating gender-related barriers in educational practice.

Related to the general issue of gender bias in educational administration are questions regarding the differential ature of the educational experience in our schools for boys and girls. It is often assumed that boys and girls are getting equal educational opportunities in our school systems but is this the case? Do the myths about gender-appropriate behaviors and expectations which pervade our society affect what happens in the schools? Are boys and girls being given equal opportunity to develop their potential? In the second part of this paper, I will examine gender issues as they relate to classroom instruction, development of self concept, and the differential gender messages contained in the "hidden curriculum" in our schools.

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Women in Educational Administration

Why are there so few women in administrative positions in education? Shakeshaft (1989) has researched this question and found that there are many barriers to the advancement of women into school administration. These barriers fall into two main types: role discrimination and access discrimination.

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Role discrimination stems from the stereotyped view that school administration is a job for males and that women are "constitutionally incapable of discipline and order, primarily because of their size and supposed lack of strength" (Shakeshaft, 1989, p. 39). Negative attitudes toward women as administrators arose out of centuries-old ideas about male dominance and continue today in assumptions about the preferred status of men in management positions. Access discrimination arises when non-job related limitations prevent or discourage women from applying for administrative positions. Access barriers may arise when recruitment processes are systematically discriminatory against women by virtue of decisions regarding how and where positions are advertised, who is encouraged to apply, and the criteria used in shortlisting of applicants.

The belief in the superiority of males over females has a long history in our society. Walker (1983) has documented how both eastern and western religions have inculcated a belief in the innate inferiority of women by characterizing women as imperfect men with defective intelligence and moral character, lacking souls, intrinsically evil, and born to be subjugated. A scant 100 years ago social psychologists such as Le Bon, the founder of social psychology, had the following appraisal of the status and characteristics of women:

> All psychologists who have studied the intelligence of women, as well as poets and novelists, recognize today that they represent the most inferior forms of human evolution and that they are closer to children and savages than to an adult, civilized man. They excel in fickleness, inconstancy, absence of thought and logic, and capacity to reason. Without doubt there exist some distinguished women, very superior to the average man, but they are as exceptional as the birth of any monstrosity, as, for example, of a gorilla with two

> heads; consequently we may neglect them entirely (1879, pp. 60-61, as quoted in Gould, 1981, pp. 104-105).

These derogatory views of the abilities of females relative to males were challenged by the results obtained from administration of the Stanford-Binet IQ test in the second decade of the 20th century (Terman, 1916). In fact, Hollingworth's (1926) study of highly gifted children in New York City found the three highest scores, all above 190 IQ, to have been scored by girls. Hollingworth challenged the view prevalent at the time that there were more eminent men that women not because of their inherent naturally high abilities but because of social and educational inequalities:

> It is undesirable to seek for the cause of sex differences in eminence in ultimate and obscure affective and intellectual differences until we have exhausted as a cause the known, obvious, and inescapable fact that women bear and rear the children, and that this has had as an inevitable sequel the occupation of housekeeping, a field where eminence is not possible (Hollingworth, 1914, p. 529).

The same belief in the overriding influence of the culture upon the development of individual potential is reflected in Feldman's (1986) analysis of the forces which brought Albert Einstein's genius to fruition. He says "if little Albert had been a girl, I think we would never have heard of her" (p. 172).

We like to think that the situation for females in society has improved a great deal, particularly in the last two decades. However, as Galbraith (1991) points out, the relationship between gender qualifications and principalships has changed little since the 1970 Royal Commission on the Status of Women found that a man was 7.5 times more likely to become a principal than a woman although he was only 2.5 times as likely to have higher qualifications than a woman. "Despite social messages implying substantial change, the majority of

today's social realities are that gifted young women of the 1990s will encounter many of the same barriers to the realization of their potential that existed two decades ago." (Hollinger, 1991, p. 135). Attitudes are very slow to change. "Most of the world still believes men to be more suitable leaders because they are supposedly more 'objective' than women and less emotional. The research on the performance of males and females in similar tasks shows no sex differences...but myths die hard (Silverman, 1986, p. 52).

At a conference on Breaking the Barriers: Women in Administration sponsored by the Alberta Teachers' Association in Calgary in November of 1991, the following barriers to women administrators were identified:

- the lack of female role models in administrative positions
- the nature of socialization and its influence on gender-stereotyped behaviors and expectations
- family responsibilities
- the lack of collegial support in self esteem
- opposition to, and lack of understanding about, affirmative action
- career ladder movement affected by interruptions of service due to child rearing
- a lack of sustaining support for women who have attained administrative positions
- biased selection process arising out of gender inequity on selection committees
- the resistance of the old boys' club or network
- the absence of accepted alternative models for practices in administration
- a perception that ATA involvement creates hindrance to administrative promotion (ATA, 1991, p. 32).

At the same conference, the following recommendations for eliminating the existing barriers facing women who seek administrative appointments were proposed:

(1) Eliminate access discrimination. It was suggested that guidelines and policies be developed to improve equity of hiring practices, for example, equitable accessibility to notification of available positions, equal gender representation on selection committees, clear specification of qualifications for advertised positions, and honest and open feedback to unsuccessful applicants.

(2) Challenge existing power structure. It was considered important to raise awareness of the existing power structure within what is commonly called "the old boys' club", to develop strategies for working within this entrenched network, as well as for changing it, and to discuss gender related issues and difficulties created by that network.

(3) Raise awareness of gender issues in education. It was deemed necessary to discuss issues of gender equity in administration, and to use gender neutral language.

(4) Examine policies on gender equity. There is a need to examine the policies on gender issues at all levels of education within the province including the Department of Education, the school boards, the Alberta Teachers' Association and the Alberta School Boards' Association. This examination should include a definition of affirmative action in these areas.

(5) Support for rural administrators. Concern was voiced regarding the special difficulties faced by rural professionals. It was recommended that opportunities for upgrading of qualifications in rural areas be improved.

Girls in Schools

In the same way that societal expectations create barriers for women to become school administrators, girls are shortchanged by the educational system.

Girls are subjected to gender bias regarding their abilities as students, their opportunity to participate fully in the learning environment, and their dignity as human beings (Robertson, 1992). Evidence from various studies has been accumulating which shows that teachers tend to hold biases in instructional style favoring boys, that these biases are reflected in differential treatment of girls during instruction, and that very negative attitudes of boys towards girls are rampant in our schools. Girls are being subjected, increasingly, to sexual harassment, degrading comments, and humiliating experiences at the hands of boys without recourse to justice from teachers. Why is this happening in our schools and what can be done about it?

Ostling (1992) wrote that "there is compelling evidence that girls are not receiving the same quality, or even quantity, of education as their brothers". While many teachers and parents and the students themselves might deny this, the evidence from a number of studies shows that girls are being shortchanged. Sadker and Sadker (1985) observed 100 fourth, fifth and sixth grade classrooms in four American states and the District of Columbia. They found that boys dominate classrooms vocally. In most of these classrooms it was expected that children would raise their hands before speaking up; however, when boys called out answers without raising their hands the teachers usually accepted the answers. This was not the case for girls. When they called out the teachers told them to raise their hands, ignored their responses and went on to somebody else. This differential response to boys and girls by teachers gives the message that boys should be academically assertive and grab the teacher's attention while girls should act "like ladies" and keep quiet. Sadker and Sadker (1985) concluded that boys are taught more actively and that they get more attention and encouragement from teachers than girls. This conclusion is consistent with what

junior and senior high school students in Edmonton had to say about what happens in the classroom:

> Ann Wilkes : I find that teachers ask the boys more questions.
>
> Craig Ross: I think guys dominate in the classroom because they are not afraid to make mistakes.
>
> Eddie Hughes: I would have to say mostly guys participate. The guys are more outgoing and ready to speak up in discussion (Faulder & Jimenez, 1992a).

The active and passive roles for boys and girls, respectively, in the classroom are self evident when boys set up equipment for science experiments and girls clean up afterwards, or boys dissect earthworms in biology while girls record results. Teachers tend to ask boys more difficult challenging questions and give them more time to think out the answers "The average female is ignored - neither reprimanded nor praised...so that girls learn that their opinions are not valued, that their responses to questions are not worthy of attention" (Shakeshaft, 1986, p. 499).

In spite of evidence that boys dominate classrooms girls don't appear to be aware of the discrimination that they may face in this regard. In a study of over 3,000 students in grades 8, 9, and 10 in Canadian schools Silverman & Holmes (1992) found that the great majority of girls (and boys) believed that students have an equal chance to do well in school irrespective of gender.

In some instances teachers make deliberate decisions about what to teach or how to teach it on the basis of perceived differences between boys and girls. Boys are considered to be more distractible and less mature than girls, and more likely to be disruptive influences. Here is what one teacher had to say "It's a bit harder to keep boys' attention during the lesson...at least that's what I have found, so I gear the subject to them more than I do the girls who are good at

paying attention in class" (Clarricoates, 1978, p. 356). This attitude may be reflected in the kinds of books that teachers select for use in the classroom. Smith, Greenlaw & Scott (1987) asked 254 elementary teachers to list their favorite books to read in the classroom. When they tabulated the top ten books listed by these teachers they found that in eight books the main characters were male, in one book the main character was a female and in one book the main characters were both male and female. In all of these books the adult women were mothers and homemakers only, and the men were portrayed as self sufficient while the women were portrayed as neurotic, selfish and in need of assistance. The only admirable female characters were animals. The trend away from prescribed texts at the elementary level towards whole language approaches is likely to make it more difficult to correct this gender bias in the selection of literary materials used in the classroom.

The situation is not any better in high school. Galloway (1980) surveyed the books recommended in 42 language arts and literature courses offered in Ontario and found that eight times as many books were authored by males as by females. Furthermore male main characters in these books outnumbered females by the ratio of seven to one. Two-thirds of the female characters were created by male writers. Only one main character out of 24 was a female character from a woman's perspective. With this lack of exposure to strong and credible female characters it is not surprising, then, that women make up only 14 of 60 famous people selected by boys and girls when asked to list interesting or important public figures in Canada (Silverman and Holmes, 1992).

Teachers often hold prejudicial views of the abilities of girls relative to boys. Cooley, Chauvin & Karnes (1984) found that both male and female teachers viewed male students as more competent in critical/logical thinking skills and creative problem solving skills than girls. However, male teachers held more

gender role stereotyped views than female teachers, believing girls to be more emotional, high strung and gullible, and less imaginative, curious, inventive, individualistic and impulsive than boys. Here is how one parent described the situation: "My daughter, an honors student...was experiencing difficulty in an honors physics class of ten students. Only two girls were in the class and when I contacted her teacher (a male), he threw up his hands and told me that girls were never good at physics! I wonder if part of the problem could have been his attitude and lack of understanding." (Reis, 1987, p. 85).

The stereotyping is particularly acute in science and math. Subtle messages abound that these areas are not suitable for girls. Recently a Barbie doll was introduced which could say, among other things, that "Math is tough". The doll was withdrawn from the market following intense complaints from consumers. Although girls can and do get good marks in math and science they tend not to choose math and science careers. Unlike the situation for boys there are few models available for girls in these areas. In junior and senior high most science teachers are men. For example, in the Edmonton Catholic schools only 42 of 540 elementary school teachers have science backgrounds (Faulder & Jimenez, 1992b). Girls need the support of teachers in order to stay with these programs. In 1989 one-third of all Alberta students in grade 12 physics or Math 31 were girls. These two courses are recommended in 29 of 34 University of Alberta Honors sciences courses (Faulder & Jimenez, 1992b). If girls are to stay with these programs it is recommended that teaching methods be adapted to the interest of girls. One such suggestion involves dealing with topics that both girls and boys are interested in. For example, instead of focusing on machines such as lawn mowers, chain saws or tractors that boys might be familiar with the emphasis might be shifted to hair dryers, sewing machines and hand mixers.

In Calgary, all-girls physics classes have been offered at William Aberhart High School for four years. In these classes, physics is made more relevant to the girls. The teacher (a male) adapts his instruction to include fewer examples involving cars in problem solving activities and more about textiles. (Faulder, 1992a). Because there are no boys to dominate class time the girls feel less intimidated about asking questions and less concerned about how they look in front of the boys. Statistics compiled by the teachers over the four years indicate that overall girls tend to do better in a female environment than in a mixed environment.

During adolescence girls experience an identity crisis that is different in some important respects from boys. Boys' social expectations are consistent with their gender roles. Individuality, aggressiveness, competition, independence, qualities which are encouraged in boys, are consistent with entry into careers. On the other hand, the social expectations of girls, such as the development of family orientation, intimacy, sensitivity, nurturance, and dependence, are inconsistent with these roles. Thus at adolescence girls are caught between the female roles which emphasize family and child rearing, and male-oriented work roles. Torn between two different sets of expectations, adolescent girls often develop feelings of frustration, discouragement, hopelessness and depression (Kline & Short, 1991). The scripted role which society requires of girls is to be quiet, pleasing and compliant, but girls, like boys, are curious, active and opinionated. "That tug of war between what society wants from girls and how they feel gives girls problems. They feel there must be something wrong with them because who they are isn't what sells." (Faulder, 1992b, p. A9). Many teenage girls experience a crisis in self confidence. Faulder (1992b) talked with more than 40 girls between the ages of 12 and 17 and followed them through a

week of school. She found that "many girls are reluctant to speak their minds and lack faith in their own beliefs, feelings and points of view" (p. A1).

Even the brightest girls are more likely to feel inadequate about themselves. They are sensitive to the force of gender politics and to the controls that boys exert in the classroom and in social situations. They feel degraded when boys rate girls on characteristics such as looks or brains. They are aware of social stereotypes to be thin, pretty, wear nice clothes and have a boyfriend. It is difficult to make a conscious decision that they are not going to conform to the stereotypes (Jimenez, 1992).

Like everybody else in society girls are bombarded by the sexist messages in the media which portray females as slim, young, beautiful and sexual. This constant portrayal of females as sex objects is reflected in the harassment girls experience in school at the hands of boys. Girls are teased about their physical appearance, their body shape, their clothes. "If you're 'too fat or too ugly' a lot of kids just come up to you and call you names. Whale. Pizza face. Some kids get Clearasil ads tucked to their locker.... Boys actually spit on the girls they don't like. Because they're guys they think they can do what they want." (Faulder, 1992c).

Girls interviewed by Faulder (1992d) spoke of the hidden curriculum in junior and senior high schools which allows boys to ridicule and demean girls. "The hidden curriculum teaches boys and girls who's in charge, what behavior is sanctioned and what's taboo." (p. A1).

Girls report having to run the gauntlet to the washroom while boys rate the girls out of 10 as they go in. If the girls retaliate by rating the boys they get a reputation for being a 'bitch'. "The culture, and the school climate, give boys permission to act this way. Nobody appears to stop them or openly condemn their behavior. Girls learn to accept this as the way it is." (Faulder, 1992d, p. A4).

Because of this unfriendly climate girls are hesitant to talk about what happens in more serious cases of sexist behavior. A shocking account of a sexual assault in an Edmonton junior high classroom documented by Faulder (1992e) reveals how hesitant a 13 year old girl felt about going to the school authorities or her parents because of her fear that everyone would know and talk about it. "And in the end her worst fears were realized. Everyone knew. Boys would whisper 'slut' when she walked by in the halls. 'It went everywhere. It was hard...schools where they didn't even know me, they were saying I was a slut and must have done something to provoke it'" (Faulder, p. A5). There was no school assembly to inform students that this form of behavior was unacceptable and illegal; there were no lectures by health professionals, no workshops on sexual assault, no public mention of the incident. The whole thing remained an open secret.

Conclusion

In this paper, I have examined some of the role and access barriers to women teachers interested in administrative positions. Old stereotypes about the roles of women and men persist even though today a large proportion of women work outside of the home. These stereotypes place limitations on the expectations of women and result in the devaluation of work done by women. On average female college graduates earn about as much as male high school dropouts, and on the whole women earn only 60% of men's wages (Reis, 1987). Some athletes (chiefly males) earn as much in one year as the combined salaries of 175 school teachers (chiefly females), according to Delisle (1991). Changes in hiring practices and attitudes are necessary to make administration more accessible to women.

Changes in our school practices are also necessary to make the classroom climate a more friendly one for girls. Teachers need to look carefully at their own instructional procedures and their own personal attitudes towards boys and

girls. There is no need to line boys and girls up separately when going outside, or to pit boys versus girls in spelling bees or math drills or to give girls in kindergarten kitchen centers frillier aprons than boys. Such segregation only reinforces stereotyped perception of differences between boys and girls in abilities and characteristics.

Our schools should not tolerate sexist comments or behaviors among our students either. It is simply not acceptable for girls to be subjected to demeaning and hurtful comments by boys about their abilities or their bodies. In the same way that we as a society are now addressing the problem of drunken drivers by making it socially unacceptable to drink and drive, we need to make it socially unacceptable for boys to harass girls in our schools. We need to talk about this problem openly, to consider alternatives for prevention, and to put in place appropriate procedures for dealing with unacceptable incidents. We also need to understand the identity crisis which girls in junior and senior high schools face and be prepared to help them academically, socially and emotionally through these turbulent years.

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